

# *Saint Louis Audubon*

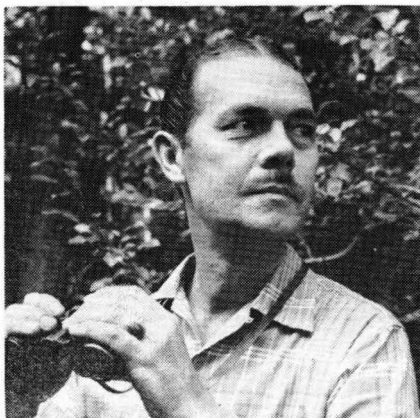
## *Bulletin*

March, 1958

Vol. 26, No. 3

### REX CONYERS RECEIVES CONSERVATION AWARD

In recognition of outstanding work in conservation, the St. Louis Audubon Society's annual citation will be presented on March 21st to Rex Conyers, a member of the Society's Board of Directors, nationally known teacher of biology, writer, lecturer and nature camp leader. An instructor in the Senior High School of University City, he is also elementary science consultant for the University City Schools.



Among his many teaching, conservation and leadership activities, Mr. Conyers conducts Sunday morning spring bird walks in Forest Park. A member of numerous educational and scientific organizations, during his 20 years of high school teaching he developed one of the first national large-scale high school conservation demonstration areas and pioneered the project method of teaching biology and conservation.

In 1950 his efforts in behalf of conservation won him the St. Louis Audubon Society's yearly scholarship to the Maine National Audubon Camp and in the summer of 1951 he served as a leader of the National Audubon Center, Greenwich, Connecticut. Mr. Conyers is also Director of the spring Nature Program in the University City camp project, in which 1,000 sixth graders participate.

The major contributor to the "Conservation Handbook" for teaching conservation and resource use of the National Association of Biology Teachers, 16 of his University City school projects are described, the only school to have more than one entry. In 1956 and '57 he assisted in the revision of two new biology textbooks and is now under contract with Henry Holt Co. He is the author of many educational articles and nature pamphlets.

In summers Rex, as he is affectionately known, has been working with Dr. Richard Weaver of the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources. This summer he will conduct a graduate workshop in conservation education for teachers at Drury College, Springfield, Missouri.

By his dedicated teaching, field work, writing, lecturing and creative leadership, Rex Conyers has inspired his students and the general public in a deeper appreciation of nature and in a heightened sensitivity of the need for wiser use of our natural resources. The Board of Directors of the St. Louis Audubon Society is indeed happy to present the 1958 Conservation Citation to their esteemed fellow-member, Rex Conyers.

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**DR. G. CLIFFORD CARL TO PRESENT**  
**"SECRETS OF THE SEA"**

The program feature on Citation Night will be the wildlife film-lecture, "Secrets of the Sea," an Audubon Screen Tour by the distinguished Canadian marine biologist, Dr. G. Clifford Carl, who will present his most recent color movie on March 21 in the auditorium of the Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington, at 8:15 p.m.

A research specialist in marine biology, Dr. Carl was educated at the University of British Columbia and received his Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. Since 1942 he has been Director of the Provincial Museum of Natural History, Victoria, B. C.

"Secrets of the Sea" explores the life within the sea and along its shores, from the rocky coasts of Vancouver Island to the fog-shrouded Pribiloff Islands of Alaska. In natural color, the motion picture shows such fascinating creatures as hermit crabs, bull seals guarding their harems, humpback whales, sea urchins and octopus, along with varied coastal sea birds that form the intricate pattern of our marine heritage.

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## OBSERVATIONS

by J. Earl Comfort

A review of 1957 birding activity in the St. Louis Area shows a year of near normal temperature on the average with precipitation well above average. The heavy flood producing rains of May were rather devastating to wildlife, especially ground nesting birds. There was a near drought in Fall relieved by normal rains during the remainder of the year.

There were 275 species and sub-species for the year, the exact number reported both in 1956 and 1957. The sparrow-finch family led with 39 species closely followed by the 37 kinds of warblers. Top five birds of the year were Ruffed Grouse, White-winged Junco, Iceland Gull, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Turkey, all being first modern records for the region. The ten next best birds were Whistling Swan, Purple Gallinule, Red-shafted Flicker, Western Grebe, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Redpoll, Glaucous Gull, Sprague's Pipit, and Western Kingbird.

There were 14 listers with 200 or more birds in the year led by Dick Anderson with 251. Others in this select group were Alberta Bolinger, Jim Comfort, Earl Comfort, Earl Hath, Steve Hanselmann, Dave Jones, Lance Jones, Jack McDonald, Sally Springer, Roger Taylor, Jack Van Benthuyssen, Dorothea Vogel and Gene Wilhelm.

Outdoor activity by the Society consisted of several field trips, the annual Forest Park Spring Sunday morning bird walks, those at Shaw's Garden in the a.m. on Saturday preceding the Forest Park walks, various picnics and several conducted field trips for the Harris Teachers College ornithology and conservation classes and the Annual Spring bird roundup census in May. In addition the Christmas count centered at Portage Des Sioux resulted in 57 species being tabbed.

The regular Tuesday morning KFYO radio broadcasts of the St. Louis Audubon nature panel had a tendency to create an interest in the overall need for practical conservation as well as furnishing interesting nature information.

The year 1958 gave us an early rarity when Dorothea Vogel, Alberta Bolinger, Kemp Hutchinson, Earl Hath and Earl Comfort identified a Boat-tailed Grackle at the Marais Temps Clair Marshes of St. Charles County on January 4th. It was an only area record of this species. Some other rarities of 1958 have been Oldsquaw Duck, White-winged Scoter Duck, Red-shafted Flicker, Redpoll and Harlan's Hawk. Unusual were the 16 great Blue Herons on the Mississippi River at Portage Des Sioux Feb. 8th.

## AUDUBON SOCIETY PROGRAM "ADVENTURES IN NATURE" ON KETC

On March sixth television station KETC in cooperation with the St. Louis Audubon Society presented the first of a 15-minute series from 8:30 to 8:45 p.m., "Adventures in Nature," with Rex Conyers as m.c. of a panel of experts—Dick Grossenheider, Earl Hath, Society President, and Gene Wilhelm. Later Martin Schweig will be a member of the panel.

The subject, "Late Winter Feeding," also included an introduction by Earl Hath to the audience of the purposes, ideals, conservation record and educational-recreational activities of the St. Louis and the National Audubon Societies. Other programs featuring special guests that will follow in the next four weeks will be: "March Out of Doors," "Animals in March," "Bird Banding" and "Migration."

The panel will welcome questions for answer on the program—also ideas and criticisms. **Please tune in every Thursday evening at 8:30**—and please write in! We need your support for the continued success of "Adventures in Nature."

Our radio program on KFUE (9:15 a.m., every Tuesday) has proved very popular. But remember—the panel needs questions for answering each week! Our grateful thanks to those members who have faithfully responded by card or letter . . . .

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### NEWS BRIEFS

Eva and Kemps Kirkpatrick, with their famous little screech owl on whose eyes they successfully operated, were interviewed by Dick Grossenheider (pinch-hitting for Earl Hath, who was

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ill) on Community Album, over KWK-TV on Monday March 3—a most illuminating and worthwhile ten minutes!

Enrollment of teachers in Harris College spring Ornithological Course is 47—a little over capacity.

Bruce Dowling, with offices at 9827 Clayton Road, is teaching Conservation Dynamics in University College, Washington University, this semester. The above address is also that of the Nature Conservancy office.

Ted Manger (Farm and Home program) on his early broadcast Sunday morning( March 2) over KMOX, described a flicker jabbing away at his mailbox, and ended by saying, "I'm going to call Rex Conyers for an explanation of this behavior."

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## OPERATION ANIMAL TRACKING

by Dick Grossenheider

The heavy snowfall of January 31, 1958 was a signal for trips to the Arboretum at Gray Summit to make animal movement observations. The first trek was on February 1st with 11 inches of snow blanketing the area, and forming great canopies of white over many dense growths of shrubs and trees.

Aside from deer tracks, which wove a forage pattern from one food source to another, the only visible evidence of activity was where snow roofs had formed, keeping the understory vegetation and ground bare. Birds and rabbits were concentrated in these shelters, and had momentarily ventured not more than two or three feet out into the deep white stuff, only to make a retreat. Where a junco or other bird alighted on a fluffy hummock "doorstep," there would be a sunburst pattern etched by spread wings and tail because the bird's feet sank deep down.

Four days later when there had been sufficient thaw to reduce snow depth to about three inches, animal tracks or signs were found in profusion. On this occasion I took off through fields and woods and along the Meramec River following the tracks of a pair of hunting coyotes for about 12 miles. Occasionally their hunting route appeared to be blocked by cedars and other trees that had toppled from the extra weight of snow on their crowns. The coyotes must have had springs in their heels. The tracks showed that at most of these points along their familiar route the gait simply changed from a trot to a lope to a bound

and the animals cleared the obstacles without touching them. Where the terrain called for it, one animal followed the other, stepping exactly in the footprints of the leader. In other situations the tracks ran side by side, or fanned out to investigate divergent cover that might produce a meal. At a rail fence a puff of brown feathers on the snow: what was this? One of the animals had located a bobwhite by scent, sight or sound. A leap of 10 feet had carried the agile canine over and clear of the snow-covered top rail and with unerring accuracy onto his quarry, one member of a covey which had left many tracks along the fence row.

How privileged to be in such a place, where wild nature and its story of ecology can be learned firsthand! The story in the snow was as clear and understandable as if the action had taken place before my eyes. Many field investigations have proved that it is the more abundant prey species that catch the attention of predators first—so mice are on the top of the list in the coyote's diet. The quail that had made a meal for the coyote had also been "protected" from starvation. The carrying capacity of the land, in winter especially, allows existence of just a certain maximum population of any given species—one phase of an omniscient complex of Natural Law. The remaining bobwhites, in this case, were actually benefitted. So none of you gentle readers need allow a strain on your heart strings.

Downslope from the coyote trails a herd of 7 deer bolted, all flags flying, from a close hiding spot. The downhill leaps of these beauties were so prodigious I had the sensation that they were literally flying. A check on the distance between landings, and I understood why it had looked like true flight—prints of the largest animal measured 30 feet or more apart!

Standing still for perhaps 15 minutes, downwind from the deer, a slight sound uphill was heard. Looking with just eye movement, the deer could be seen through the timber slowly, hesitantly, silently slipping back to their chosen territory!

About three in the afternoon, with the sun making a feeble attempt to burn through the overcast, I came upon a giant possum hungrily eating frozen crab-apples which he was excavating from under the snow. He seemed to have no trouble locating them by scent. (Nearby were five deer in similar pursuit.) As soon as the severe cold of the preceding days had moderated and the deep snow had melted down sufficiently, he had wasted no time in getting out of a warm den to appease hunger that had probably been gnawing for three or four days. What if it **was** daylight and he didn't have protection of darkness usually waited for? He had taken that chance. Through

binoculars this possum's ears, tail, and toes all looked in good shape. (Often the bare extremities get frozen and sore in severe weather if these animals aren't warmly bedded.) His prints looked different from the usual possum tracks—they were in closer alignment, which he felt caused less bare-footed contact with the snow. Following them in reverse led to a cozy hollow snag den from which there had been no other departure.

At the edge of a sinkhole the tracks of a mink following those of a cottontail led into the labyrinth of the crater. Likewise prints of flying squirrel and fox squirrel, long-tailed weasel, gray fox, wood mouse and shrew were seen. All of these animals had been eagerly foraging for food at their respective sources of supply.

Before returning to the car darkness had come, so I stopped to listen for night sounds. In a few minutes, from down a valley slope, came the yap of a fox—then sustained silence. Finally, as on previous occasions, I put my "muzzle" in the air to "talk with" the coyotes. This time there was no answer. It had been a day!! In all this world of wilderness I was elated to have found not a single human print to mar the pristine winter beauty.

Richard (Dick) Grossenheider, St. Louis wildlife artist-naturalist, with Dr. W. H. Burt published "A Field Guide to the Mammals" (in the Peterson Series) and is illustrator of "The Mammals of Michigan" by William H. Burt. He has just completed color plates for a new edition of Merriam-Webster's Dictionary.

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## ST. LOUIS AUDUBON BULLETIN

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### SCHEDULED FIELD TRIP

On Saturday, April 5, Creve Coeur Lake. Meet at refreshment stand at 8:00 a.m. Leaders Earl Comfort and Earl Hath.

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